OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Ollie Morrissey

Deerpark

Athenry

Galway

H65FP28

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 18 April 2026

Re: Observation to the proposed development of open-cycle gas turbine (OCGT) and generator with ancillary equipment.

Location: Pollnagroagh and Rathmorrissy (Townlands), Athenry, Co. Galway

Applicant: Bord Gáis Energy Limited

Dear Sir/Madam,

My residence is 2.19km from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

My name is Ollie Morrissey, and I live in Deerpark. I am a dairy farmer, milking 60 cows, with 30 calves and 30 two-year-old cattle. Farming is not just my job — it is my livelihood and my future.
I live in my family home with my mother and siblings. Our farm has been in the family for generations, and it supports both our income and our way of life.
I have serious concerns about the impact of the proposed development on my farm, my animals, and my family's health.
Scientific evidence clearly shows that air pollution from combustion sources — including fine particulate matter (PM2.5), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and associated pollutants — has direct and harmful effects on livestock. These pollutants are inhaled by animals and can enter the bloodstream, causing inflammation, weakening the immune system, and increasing susceptibility to disease.
For a dairy farmer, this means a higher risk of sick animals, including respiratory illness and infections such as mastitis. This leads to increased veterinary costs, greater use of antibiotics, and reduced animal welfare. It also results in lower milk yield and poorer milk quality, directly impacting farm income. There is also evidence

that pollutants, including heavy metals, can transfer into milk, raising serious concerns about food safety and consumer confidence .
My animals are exposed continuously. They breathe the air, graze on the land, and drink from the local water sources. I have no way to prevent this exposure. Pollution does not stay in the air — it settles onto soil and grass, where it is then ingested by livestock. Over time, this can lead to a build-up of contaminants in the soil and in the animals themselves.
This is a major concern for me. If my land becomes contaminated, it affects everything — the grass my cows eat, the health of my animals, and the quality of the milk I produce. Heavy metals and pollutants do not break down easily; they accumulate over time, creating a long-term problem that cannot simply be reversed. This represents a serious risk to the sustainability of my farm.
I am particularly concerned about my calves and young stock. Young animals are more vulnerable to pollution, with weaker immune systems and developing lungs. Scientific evidence shows that exposure can affect their growth, health, and long-term productivity. If calves become sick or fail to thrive, it has lasting consequences for the future of my herd and my business .
I also farm under derogation, which means I must meet strict environmental standards. I am required to carefully manage nutrients, protect water quality, and maintain high environmental performance. However, I have no control over pollution coming from external sources. If air pollution affects my soil, grass, or water, it could put my compliance at risk, despite doing everything correctly on my farm.
In addition to the impact on farming, I have serious concerns about human health. My mother suffers from respiratory issues, and any increase in air pollution would be a major concern for her wellbeing, as well as for the rest of my family living here.

High-Intensity Emissions and Diesel Impacts

I am concerned about the potential impact of air pollution from this proposed development. Pollutants such as nitrogen oxides (NOx) and fine particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) are known to damage air quality, irritate the lungs, and contribute to long-term harm to both human health and the environment. Although the plant would not operate continuously, it may run at extremely high output when required, leading to short but intense bursts of pollution, particularly during start-up and peak demand periods. The possible use of diesel during these times is especially worrying, as it produces higher levels of harmful emissions, including nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, and particulate matter.

These pollutants can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream, increasing the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular illness, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children, older people, and those with existing health conditions. Fine particulate matter can also travel long distances and accumulate over time, meaning the impacts may extend beyond the immediate area and persist in the long term. In summary, I have reservations regarding the thoroughness of the assessment of these emissions. This issue presents significant implications for public health and environmental protection, especially in relation to EU air quality standards established by Directive 2008/50/EC.

Risk of Groundwater Contamination from Fuel Storage and Handling

I am concerned about the risks of soil and groundwater contamination from this proposed peaker plant. The development would involve the storage and handling of fuels such as diesel, along with lubricating oils and other chemicals, all of which could pose a risk to the surrounding environment. There is a real possibility that these substances could leak, spill, or enter the ground through surface runoff over the long lifetime of the facility, potentially up to 2050, and even small but repeated incidents could lead to a gradual build-up of pollution in soil and groundwater.

This is particularly worrying because once groundwater becomes contaminated, it is extremely difficult and costly to remediate, and the impacts can persist for decades. This raises serious concerns about the long-term protection of local water resources and the surrounding environment. There remains uncertainty about whether these risks have been adequately managed, raising substantial worries that the project might cause permanent damage to water quality. This would violate the obligations under EU Directive 2000/60/EC, which mandates the protection of water bodies and prohibits their deterioration.

Derogation Limits

As a derogation farmer, I operate under strict environmental limits and take compliance very seriously, but there is concern that this proposed development could make it much harder to remain within those limits. Additional environmental pressure from nearby industrial activity, including emissions or contamination linked to diesel use, could increase nitrate levels in the area, which is entirely outside my control. This could result in penalties, reduced stocking levels, or even the loss of derogation status, despite full compliance with regulations, leading to serious financial and operational consequences. Overall, this creates an unfair situation where farmers may be penalised for environmental impacts arising from a development beyond their control.

Need for Precaution Due to Uncertainty

There is significant concern regarding the insufficient assessment of long-term health impacts on children, particularly with respect to repeated exposure associated with intermittent plant operation and diesel utilisation. Since children are especially susceptible to air pollution, uncertainty surrounding these effects warrants scrutiny. It is inadequate to presume minimal risk without substantial, transparent evidence. Given these circumstances, it is recommended that a precautionary approach be adopted to prioritise the health and wellbeing of children and to ensure that all potential risks are thoroughly evaluated and mitigated.

Increased Heavy Traffic and Diesel Transport Risks

As someone who lives locally and uses this road, I am concerned about road safety in relation to the proposed entrance on the L3103. This stretch of road is already extremely narrow, with no hard shoulder, making it difficult for two heavy goods vehicles to pass safely and leaving no margin for error. Visibility is also poor due to blind dips and sharp bends, meaning drivers often cannot see oncoming traffic in time. The proposed development would increase traffic levels, including heavy goods vehicles, construction traffic, and fuel deliveries such as diesel tankers, all of which require space and clear sightlines that this road does not provide.

Given that these rural roads are used by residents, farm machinery, and school-related traffic, the addition of significant industrial traffic would increase the risk of accidents and create a more hazardous environment. Overall, there is strong concern that the existing road infrastructure is not suitable for this level of traffic and that the associated safety risks have not been adequately addressed.

Risk of Fire and Explosion from Fuel Storage

As someone living in the area, I am very concerned about the safety risks associated with this proposed development. The project involves the storage, handling, and use of highly flammable fuels such as natural gas and diesel, which carry an inherent risk of fire or explosion. In the event of equipment malfunctions, leaks, or operational challenges, these substances may pose an ignition risk, potentially resulting in significant incidents. Considering the intermittent yet high-intensity operation of a peaker plant, the likelihood of such occurrences warrants careful consideration.

The potential consequences are particularly worrying, as any incident could have serious impacts on nearby homes, residents, farmland, and livestock. This raises significant concerns about whether the risks have been fully assessed and whether this location is appropriate for a development of this nature.

Landscape Character and Policy Conflict

There are serious concerns that the proposed development would represent a significant industrial intrusion into a rural landscape characterised by agricultural land use and dispersed residential development. The scale, height, and industrial nature of the plant—including buildings, stacks, lighting, and fuel storage—would fundamentally alter the character of the area, introducing a visually dominant feature into what is currently a quiet rural setting. This type of development does not appear consistent with the existing landscape, nor does the area have the capacity to absorb such change without significant adverse effects. These concerns are particularly relevant in the context of the Galway County Development Plan, specifically Policies LCM1, LCM2, and LCM3, which seek to protect landscape character, recognise landscape sensitivity, and ensure that development is appropriate to its setting.

Lack of Clear, Accessible, and Effective Communication

There are concerns that community engagement in relation to this project has been insufficient and ineffective. Many residents did not receive any direct communication or notification about the proposed development, and while some individuals report receiving a flyer or attending an information event, the material provided was highly technical and difficult to understand without specialist knowledge. This limits meaningful public participation, as effective consultation requires information to be accessible, clearly explained, and actively communicated to all affected members of the community. In this case, the complexity and level of technical detail in the documentation creates a barrier to understanding, meaning that many people cannot fully assess the potential impacts of the development.

Complexity of EIAR and Barriers to Public Understanding

There are concerns that, while the development is presented within a single Environmental Impact Assessment Report, the scale, volume, and complexity of the documentation make it extremely difficult for the public to understand the project as a whole. The high level of technical detail, combined with the way the information is structured, creates a significant barrier to meaningful engagement. Although the material is not formally divided into separate reports, the practical effect is similar to fragmentation, as it is not easy to assess the cumulative impacts across all aspects of the development. This raises concerns regarding transparency and accessibility within the planning process.

Reliance on Regulation Does Not Eliminate Risk

The Environmental Impact Assessment depends on forthcoming regulation, licensing, and monitoring to manage environmental effects. Nonetheless, regulatory oversight cannot entirely remove environmental risks or ensure that actual emissions and impacts will match those projected by models. Uncertainty persists regarding the long-term performance of the development, especially under diverse operational scenarios.

Conclusion

This proposal presents important concerns regarding people, public health, agriculture, and the surrounding environment. Because the documentation is complex and community engagement has been limited, many individuals have found it challenging to take part in the decision-making process. Communities should not

face uncertain or potentially substantial environmental risks. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that planning permission be refused.

Yours Sincerely,

Name: Ollie Morrissey
Date: 18 April 2026